

Michael Frome Academy - Frequently Asked Questions

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General:

What is a charter school?

Charter schools are public schools started by teachers, parents, and/or community members who apply for a "charter," which defines the school's specific mission and goals, and how these goals will be measured. Charter schools must be authorized by a sponsor, who then files a letter of intent to sponsor a charter school with the Minnesota Department of Education for approval. Sponsors of charter schools may be non-profit organizations, foundations, local school districts, intermediate school districts, or post-secondary institutions. Michael Frome Academy is sponsored by the Audubon Center of the North Woods, a non-profit organization. Charter schools are accountable to their sponsors, parents and families, the state, and the public for achieving measurable results in student achievement and for implementing fiscally sound management. Charter schools are extremely diverse in their focuses. From project-based high schools to arts-intensive schools to online learning and technology-focused schools, the missions of charter schools in Minnesota vary widely. Since charter schools are public schools, they are open to anyone, free of charge.

What is the difference between a charter school and other public schools?

Charter schools are public schools that are site-based and managed, meaning that teachers, parents, and local community members choose the people who govern the operation of the school. Charter schools elect their own school boards to oversee all aspects of the school's mission, goals, and operations. The autonomy charter schools enjoy creates an environment where creativity and innovation in teaching and learning flourish. In addition, charter schools often have a particular approach to education or focus for their programs that differentiate them from other schools. For example, some charter schools focus on experiential learning, or Core Knowledge, or project-based learning, or technology. Michael Frome Academy is an environment-focused charter school with a place-based approach but includes a strong core curriculum and an emphasis on the arts and music. Often, charter schools have smaller enrollments than neighboring district schools offering smaller class sizes and lower student to teacher ratios. Perhaps most important, a charter school is set up around the needs of children, not around the needs of adults. The focus should always be on the kids, and programs should be designed to help children succeed, no matter what it takes

How are charter schools funded?

Charter schools are funded by the State of Minnesota on a per-pupil basis. In addition, charter schools receive state support for their facilities expenses because they cannot issue bonds or raise taxes through levies like other school districts. Charter schools currently receive up to three years of federal charter school start-up funding, nearly \$600,000 over the three years. Charter schools can qualify for federal title funding, English Language Learning, and special education funds.

Does MFA offer before- and after-school care?

For MFA students needing before or after school care, we are recommending The Primrose School of Woodbury. Primrose has an educational focus similar to MFA and they are able to transport our students back and forth between the two schools. To register or for more information, please contact Tonya Holt at 651-731-5333. www.primrosewoodbury.com

Will MFA grow to become a K-8 school?

The state of Minnesota approved our charter for a K-5 program. MFA plans to add a grade level each year, expanding to serve students in grades 4 and 5 in 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, respectively.

Is a transition from ½ day K to full day K mid-year an option?

Yes, this is a possibility based on class size and student performance.

What does the MFA facilities look like?

The building is 4,170 square feet and is an open environment, except for the ½ day kindergarten class/Music Room.

Transportation:**How will bussing be handled?**

South Washington County School District #833 provides transportation for students residing in the district. The school day is from 8:10am – 3:05pm for full-day kindergarten students and grades 1-3 (4-5). Busing for half-day kindergarten students will follow the morning bus schedule drop-off at school and pick-up of morning kindergarten students at 12:00pm. (There is no half-day kindergarten offered in the afternoon.)

Curriculum and Instruction:**Will the Michael Frome Academy provide special education services?**

Yes. As a public school we are required by law to provide Special Education Services. We have a qualified Special Education teacher on staff. We contract for Special Education Director Services with ISES – Innovative Special Education Services. We contract for other special education services either with licensed special education providers or with the Family Achievement Center out of St. Paul.

Will another language be taught at MFA?

This is not in the charter as part of the educational program. As we grow, we can consider adding this as part of our curriculum.

Will your curriculum be the same as the public schools?

The curriculum exceeds Minnesota's Academic Standards in all areas, especially including math, science, and the arts. A strong literacy program includes integration of place-based learning. (See Curriculum Info Handout for more specific information.)

Is there another model/example of the EIC curriculum in use?

Yes, there are many EIC schools across the country. Great Expectations Charter School, located in Grand Marais, MN, is also sponsored by the Audubon Center of the North Woods and is an EIC school.

www.greatexpectationsschool.com

Is there a fee for the all-day Kindergarten program?

Yes. Public schools only receive funding to support a ½ day in Kindergarten. Therefore, to balance our budget, MFA will charge a fee for the remainder. Currently, this fee is \$16/day for a total of \$2,718. Monthly, quarterly and full payments options are available.

What happens when educational needs exceed the 3rd grade level (before the next grade levels are added)?

Individual Learning Plans are created for all students, based on academic performance, assessments, and student interest and learning style, so that individual academic goals can be set with input from teacher, student, and parent. Children performing above grade level will be challenged and supported through this process.

Please describe or post detailed information on the math & science curriculum and how you plan to challenge “gifted” students.

Math Expressions by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is a comprehensive standards-based K-5 mathematics curriculum that offers new ways to teach and learn mathematics. Combining the most powerful elements of reform mathematics with the best of traditional approaches, **Math Expressions** uses objects, drawings, conceptual language, and real-world situations to help students build mathematical ideas that make sense to them.

The science curriculum will focus on 4 units: Physics, Biology/Environmental Science, Earth Science, and Chemistry.

All students will be provided academic challenge through their Individual Learning Plan.

What role do computers play in classroom learning within this model?

Computers will be used as learning tools for students to do research, gather data, word processing, projects, etc. as well as for the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessments given at least two times per school year.

We will look into incorporating the following computerized programs as we grow:

[CompassLearning](#) tutorials will be available to accelerate student learning. Odyssey®, our software-based curriculum, assesses each student’s understanding of key objectives. Based on this assessment, a student is automatically prescribed a personalized learning path filled with engaging activities. The time-consuming task of monitoring and measuring student success is made easier with Odyssey’s wide variety of reporting features. CompassLearning is completely aligned with NWEA MAP learning goals and creates a “learner profile” for each child to supplement and enhance the curriculum.

The [Project Globe](#) program will be utilized as well. GLOBE (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment) is a worldwide hands-on, primary and secondary school-based science and education program. GLOBE's vision promotes and supports students, teachers and scientists to collaborate on inquiry-based investigations of the environment and the Earth system working in close partnership with NASA and NSF Earth System Science Projects ([ESSPs](#)) in study and research about the dynamics of Earth's environment.

Multi-age grouping: how do you manage differences in maturity levels, interests, and behavior?

MFA teachers utilize dynamic grouping, provide differentiated instruction, and inquiry based learning experiences to meet not only the diverse academic, but also social needs of each child.

In a setting with performance-based grouping, does a ½ day K student get “grouped” as needed, or are they treated as their own group?

The kindergarten teacher will utilize dynamic grouping within the class to provide instruction that meets each student’s needs.

Parent Involvement and Community Building:

Will the Michael Frome Academy provide opportunities for parent involvement?

Yes, there is an active group of parents that meet one time a month for our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings. Check the website for dates and times.

What will *daily* parent involvement at the school look like?

Daily parent involvement can include reading at night with children, working on inquiry-based projects at home with their children, and/or volunteering on field trips or in the classroom (if parents are available and willing). The Suzuki master classes also allow for parent involvement (once a month, parents are expected to attend a violin lesson with their master teacher at the school unless they are studying the instrument outside of school).

MFA will never “require” parental involvement and will support all levels of involvement at the school.

Can parents bring siblings with them on field trips or when volunteering?

No. Due to insurance restrictions, we are not able to accommodate younger siblings on our field trips or when volunteering during the school day.

Suzuki Music Program**Are the Suzuki lessons private 1:1 or in a group? If group, what is the teacher: student ratio?**

Using the Suzuki approach to music within MFA’s multi-age, dynamic groupings implies that primarily small groups will be taught as master classes. However, 1:1 lessons and whole group lessons (“play-ins”) are part of the approach, as well. All MFA students participate in the Suzuki music program where they study violin with master teachers from the St. Paul Conservatory of Music. During Suzuki music lessons, students learn to work cooperatively with others, to think critically and creatively, and to become focused, adept learners. Students participate in a 20-30 minute small group lesson one time a week and a large group lesson for 60 minutes one time a month.

Can all students work with the music program or is it for advanced students who have already participated in Suzuki?

The Suzuki music program is available for all students.